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SUBJECT: A/S WELCH AND DAPNSA ABRAMS MEET WITH FM KHATIB

Classified By: Ambassador David Hale for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) NEA Assistant Secretary David Welch and Deputy Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs Elliot Abrams met November 2 in Amman with Foreign Minister Abdellelah Khatib. Ambassador also attended, as did U.S. and Jordanian note-takers.

Palestinians and Israelis

¶2. (C) Welch provided Khatib with readouts on his meetings earlier that day in Tel Aviv, Ramallah and Jerusalem. He told Khatib he was confident there would be no objection from the Israelis to practical efforts to help make Abu Mazen more effective. Khatib asked whether this included sending the Jordan-based Palestinian Badr Brigade into the territories under Abu Mazen's control, and Welch replied that it did.

¶3. (C) During discussion of Abu Mazen's options to bring about a new government, Welch and Abrams reiterated the need for the U.S. and partners like Jordan to coordinate efforts to support Abu Mazen and move him toward steps that would bring the PA into compliance with the Quartet principles. Otherwise, the Palestinian issue will become a humanitarian problem, rather than just a political one. Khatib agreed, and said Jordan was pressing Abu Mazen to move promptly. Khatib also repeatedly urged U.S. "flexibility" in evaluating any new Palestinian government's compliance with the Quartet's principles. Khatib stressed the mounting pressures that continuing chaos in the territories would place on Jordan. Welch and Abrams replied that a new government's compliance would need to be clear and beyond doubt.

Lebanon

¶4. (C) Khatib expressed concern that Hizballah and its backers were making a move to escalate against Siniora; support for Siniora's morale and physical security was key. Welch agreed. Khatib jokingly asked whether there was truth to regional media speculation that Sir Nigel Sheinwald's visit to Damascus was at USG initiative. The Americans expressed skepticism about the utility of missions like Sheinwald's as long as Bashar continued to tell his interlocutors what they wanted to hear while at the same time pursuing destabilizing activities in Lebanon and with Palestinian factions. Khatib agreed.

Iraq

¶5. (C) Khatib raised the upcoming U.S elections and the Baker-Hamilton commission's study of Iraq policy, and noted concern in the region that a sudden U.S. withdrawal from Iraq was becoming a possibility. Welch and Abrams acknowledged the U.S. political debate over Iraq strategy, but assured Khatib that no leader in either major U.S. party was

advocating a near-term exit from Iraq.

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